



Strategies for Transformative Change

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE RESEARCH AND LEADERSHIP

USING NAVIGATORS TO SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS

Transformative Change Initiative Overview

The Transformative Change Initiative (TCI) is dedicated to assisting community colleges to scale-up innovations that improve student outcomes and program, organization, and system performance.

Transformative Change Definition

Raising the individual, organizational and system performance of community colleges to unprecedented levels without sacrificing their historic commitment to access and equity.

The Gulf Coast IT Consortium (GCIT) includes a total of nine community and technical colleges in Louisiana (LA) and Mississippi (MS) who joined together with funding from a Round Two U.S. Department of Labor Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant to address the demand of local and regional employers for information technology (IT) workers. The consortium identified three sectors in which to focus: Cyber Security, Health Informatics and Industrial IT.

Bossier Parish Community College in Bossier City, LA leads the consortium, with these members: Delgado Community College, New Orleans, LA; Louisiana Delta Community College, Monroe, LA; South Louisiana Community College, Lafayette, LA; Copiah-Lincoln Community College, Wesson, MS; Meridian Community College, Meridian, MS; Mississippi Delta Community College, Moorhead, MS; Northeast Mississippi Community College, Booneville, MS; and Pearl River Community College, Poplarville, MS.

The consortium selected five strategies for implementation:

- Develop career pathways
- Offer stacking credentials
- Integrate hybrid and online learning and supports
- Build transferable and portable credentials
- Align with Accelerating Opportunity to maximize employer and workforce partnerships.



The consortium colleges implemented 12 semester hours of common foundational core and specialty courses using the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) model, which integrates basic skills and technical instruction.

Students come into the IT programs from a variety of backgrounds, including individuals interested in getting back into the workforce, formerly incarcerated individuals, veterans, Adult Basic Education students seeking a dual enrollment option, and individuals referred by college counseling centers, WIA, or community based organizations. Recognizing a need for a holistic approach to supporting success for the diversity of IT students, the colleges employed Career Navigators.

Major Factors That Influenced the Implementation Of Navigators

Partnerships. The two state systems, the Louisiana Community & Technical College System and the Mississippi Board for Community Colleges, have provided continuous policy support for implementation and sustainability. In addition, other partners assisted the consortium including: Jobs for the Future (JFF) supported the Accelerating Opportunities (AO) and scaling initiative; the Washington State Board for Technical and Community Colleges (SBCTC) assisted with the design and scaling of I-BEST; the National College Transition Network (NCTN)

delivered quality professional development and the National Council for Workforce Education (NCWE) provided business and industry leadership.

Program Silos. Across the consortium, individuals in Adult Basic Education Divisions, Workforce Divisions, and Career and Technical Education committed to overcoming their previous experience of working within their program silos to work together on the strategies.

SIGNIFICANT ASPECTS OF THE ROLE OF NAVIGATOR

One-stop Resource. The navigators served as the first point of contact for prospective students and continued as the identified resource person throughout the program, so individuals would know who to go to for help at any point. Navigators offered a full range of support services including information on prior learning assessment process, advising, career counseling, referral services, tutoring, and assistance securing employment. Some colleges shared the navigator with their One-Stop Centers to connect participants with potential employers, which has been beneficial in building stronger partnerships with the centers.

College Access. Navigators worked with prospective students to help them explore interests and to match them with the appropriate program of study. Students were told about Open Campus at Bossier Parish Community College, which provides free online non-credit courses to help individuals prepare for placement testing, build study skills and brush up on professional skills. Two colleges had significant numbers of students enrolled in non-credit, short-term training programs who were prospects for credit programs. Navigators spent significant time with these students to match them with appropriate credit programs.

The navigators answered questions about careers, certifications, current business and industry needs, trends in the local and regional area, skills required for specific jobs, I-BEST, and dual enrollment options. They explained the flexibility of the programs with their online and hybrid courses, accelerated format, and ability to transfer to other two and four-year programs. Navigators helped students develop an academic plan for completion, along with using a toolkit to help students formulate their financial plan for completion.

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA). Prior to the grant, the colleges had little or no PLA policy. The policies in place were not consistently used, and the fees varied. The consortium placed a strong focus on strengthening PLA, and each college, with the support of their state agency, reviewed and approved a new PLA policy in order to qualify potential students for credit and further promote entry and enhance the prospects for completion.

The navigator played a key role in the implementation of new PLA policies and processes. As part of the intake process, navigators explained PLA and assessed whether the prospective student had prior experience or work-based learning that might qualify for credit, including workplace certifications, exams and military training. Students left armed with information to begin the process of PLA. The navigator would follow the student to assist in completion of the process if necessary.

LESSONS LEARNED

Navigator Caseload. Early in the grant period, navigators found themselves with few students, but that changed. In the third and fourth year, colleges reported that the navigators had too many students to devote the necessary time. At this point in the grant, the colleges have identified a caseload of 25 students per semester as the desired limit for each navigator. With the anecdotal information and success stories that have been shared across the consortium, the colleges have won the support of their administration to seek funding to retain the navigator position.

PLA Credit. With the changes to PLA policy and practice within the consortium, the colleges had to identify a way to assign credit on the transcript for a student who had certification from external experience that matched a college course. Initially, instructors assigned credit for the course without a letter grade that could be calculated into the student GPA. Conversations are currently underway to examine how grades might be assigned in the future.

PLA Data. As the consortium is engaged in the final year of TAACCCT grant funding, they have learned that they do not have data on students receiving PLA. Without being able to identify from transcripts which students earned credit for prior experience, the colleges are unable to compare the success of students receiving PLA and those who did not. Additionally, the colleges cannot determine whether any student receiving PLA earned a degree or credential, or whether employment was secured after exit or completion, and whether the PLA credit translated to the workplace.

DATA

Program Outcomes 12/31/15

Total Unique Participants Served	2,246
Total Number of Credentials Earned	1,733

NOTE: The GCIT Consortium is just now obtaining completers due to the late start of the grant. The completion outcome has affected other outcomes. All of the employment information has not been verified and is therefore not reported.

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